

# College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

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## Admissions Watch

### Bennington Admits 37 Percent EDI.

Bennington C. in Vermont received 1,301 applications during its Early Action and Early Decision I rounds, and admitted 477 of them for an admit rate of 37 percent. Most of the students placed in the top 10 percent of their graduating class. Their average ACT score was 32, their average SAT evidence-based reading and writing score was 721, average SAT math score was 657. Seventeen percent of those admitted are first-generation college students and 21 percent are Pell Grant-eligible. About 63 percent will receive financial aid.

Bennington, founded in 1932, is situated on a “stunning” 440-acre campus. It considers itself a “vanguard institution” which allows students to design their own academic path called “The Plan,” which is structured with intense consultation with relevant faculty members. Students also gain “real-world” experience each year through the college’s required “Field Work Term.”

“We are deeply impressed by applicants’ curiosity, creativity, civic engagement and courage,” David Buckwald, vice president for enrollment management and marketing, told *Vermont Business Magazine*.

**Bowdoin Tops 14,000 Apps.** Bowdoin C. in Maine attracted more than 14,000 applications for its Class of 2029, 6 percent more than last year and the most in school history. Last year, Bowdoin saw its applications soar by 20 percent. This cycle, Bowdoin’s Early Decision I and II rounds each drew 2,000 applications, from which 296 students were offered admission, for an admit rate of 14.8 percent. Another 25 students were admitted through the QuestBridge National College Match program. Regular Decision results will be released in mid-March.

According to the *Bowdoin Orient*, Claudia Marroquin, senior vice president and dean of

admissions and student aid, said, “I’m excited by the students who have been admitted and incredibly humbled by the remarkable strength of the applicants we have in our pool. Every round of decisions thus far has been difficult, and I know that will continue to be true as we continue to enter the next phase of our process.”

### James Madison’s Apps Up 34 Percent Since 2022.

James Madison U. in Virginia, attracted 44,789 undergraduate applications for Fall 2025, a 7 percent increase from last year and 34 percent jump from 2022. Of those, 40,072 were first-year applications for JMU’s Class of 2025, a 10 percent increase from last year. Applicants came from all 50 states and 119 different countries. Top academic interest areas included exploratory biology, nursing, psychology, marketing, finance, pre-medicine and pre-law.

“Once again, JMU continues to show that we are an institution to watch in terms of commitment to academic excellence and athletics,” said Melinda Wood, vice president for enrollment management. “Our national reputation as well as a student-focused, hands-on approach to learning makes JMU appealing, especially when you couple that with a strong campus community that is known for its supportiveness.”

### The Johns Hopkins Reports ED I and II.

Johns Hopkins U. in Baltimore admitted 551 students through its Early Decisions I and II. About 20 percent of them are first in their families to attend college, and more than 60 percent attended public high schools. About 68 percent of them are headed for the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences, with the remainder matriculating in the Whiting School of Engineering, according to *The News-Letter*. Regular Decision decisions will be released on March 21.

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## Financial Aid Matters

**FAFSA Mandates.** A decade after Louisiana launched its program requiring high school seniors to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, half a dozen more states followed suit. As a result, 44 percent of public high school seniors are enrolled in states with similar policies, according to a new study from The Century Foundation.

Its study of seven of those states found:

- “All seven states outperformed the rest of the country in terms of year-over-year change in public school FAFSA completions.... This translates into 86,700 new FAFSA completions over expectation in one year.”

- “In five of seven states, the FAFSA completion gap between high- and low-income districts narrowed.... And in Texas, low-income districts took the lead.”

- “In three of the five states for which data is available, increases in first-time undergraduate enrollment outperformed increases in the rest of the country. Across these five states, this translates into 21,900 new annual first-time undergraduates over expectation in one year.”

### Florida Eliminated In-State Tuition for Undocumented Students.

The Florida legislature passed a new comprehensive immigration law that reverses previous state policy and eliminates in-state tuition for undocumented students, even if they graduated from Florida high schools. Previously, they could apply for a waiver from the prohibition. The new legislation eliminates that option.

The *Miami Herald* estimated that the new *continued on page 3*

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## ADMISSIONS WATCH

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**Rice Admits 6 Percent ED II.** Some 2,513 students applied to Rice U. in Houston through its Early Decision II round. But only 6 percent were admitted, Yvonne Romero, vice president for enrollment, told the *Rice Thresher*. A total of 36,749 students applied this year through Rice's three rounds of admission, 13 percent more than last year.

"This year's admissions cycle caps off the end of a five-year plan, announced in 2021, to expand Rice's undergraduate population by 20 percent to 4,800," Romero told the paper.

**UConn Apps Top 62,000.** Two consecutive NCAA Division I basketball championships are just part of the reason that more than 62,000 students applied to become members of the U. of Connecticut's Class of 2029. This also was UConn's first Early Decision cycle, and it received 1,500 early applications, offering admission to about 60 percent of them. About 4,500 new students are expected to enroll at its flagship Storrs campus, with another 2,000 at its regional campuses. The university also expects to enroll about 950 transfers from other institutions.

"The surging interest in UConn demonstrates that its reputation for high academic quality, strong value and a positive student experience is well known both throughout Connecticut and nationally," said Nathan Fuerst, vice president for student life and enrollment.

**USC Attracts 83,000 Apps.** The U. of Southern California received about 83,000 applications for its Class of 2029, about half were Early Action students. USC accepted 3,500 students EA. It expects to admit between 5,000 and 5,400 more through its Regular Decision cycle, according to the *Daily Trojan*.

**UVA Admits 6,746 Early Action.** The U. of Virginia attracted 41,885 Early Action applications, 4,000 more than last year, or an 11 percent increase. More than 11,000 of those came from Virginia students, while 30,700 came from out-of-state. Of those EA applicants, 6,746 were offered to join its Class of 2029. Some 2,788 of those admitted come from Virginia. Early Action is the university's largest admissions round.

In December, UVA admitted students through its Early Decision cycle, which saw an 11 percent increase in applications. In-state students posted a 29.5 percent acceptance rate, while out-of-state applicants were admitted at a rate of 21 percent. Students who applied during that Regular Decision round will be notified of their future on April 1. UVA aims to enroll

## ENROLLMENT TRENDS

**Black Male Enrollment Initiative.** Morgan State U. in Baltimore, the third largest HBCU in the nation, has formed a State of Black Male Enrollment Initiative to investigate the university's 14 percent decline in this critical student sector and to recommend solutions to reverse the trend. David K. Wilson, university president, announced the initiative after reading data from the American Institute for Boys and Men that highlighted at 25 percent drop in black male enrollment at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and a 22 percent decline across all U.S. higher education institutions.

"The ongoing decline in black male enrollment at HBCUs is a clarion call for action, and we will not stand idly by," said President Wilson.

**Demographic Dip.** The number of high school graduates is expected to peak this year, and then decline steadily through 2041, according to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. Each year WICHE publishes "Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates" which projects the number of graduates for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Find it at <https://wiche.edu/knocking/key-findings/graduates>.

**Glenville State Enrollment Up 10 Percent in 2024.** Glenville State U. in West Virginia saw its Fall 2024 freshmen enrollment jump by 10 percent over the previous year. Overall enrollment grew by 6 percent. GSU nearly doubled the number of enrolled WV Promise Scholars.

The school attributed its robust numbers to expansion of traditional scholarship opportunities, early college access programs and minimal increases in tuition. GSU has the lowest resident tuition and fees among public West Virginia institutions.

"Glenville State University is deeply committed to expanding opportunities for prospective students to ensure they have access to a quality education," said Ricki Butler, assistant vice president for enrollment management.

**Harvard Partners With QuestBridge.** Harvard U., which experienced a significant decline in the number of first-year minority

3,970 students in its new class.

"To say they impressed us would be an understatement," said Greg Roberts, dean of admission, referring to the EA admits.

**Vanderbilt's ED I&II Admit Rate Drops.** Vanderbilt U. in Nashville, Tennessee, attracted 6,762 Early Applications, up 16 percent from last year. It admitted 13.2 percent of its

students following the recent Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action, announced it has signed a partnership with QuestBridge National College Match. The partnership will, as William Fitzsimmons, dean of admissions and financial aid, put it, "help strengthen Harvard Admissions' outreach to recruit the most exceptional students from a broad range of backgrounds and experiences." The first Harvard QuestBridge Scholars will matriculate in Fall 2026.

**Texas A&M Caps Enrollment.** After a decade of "massive" enrollment increases (30 percent over the last decade), Texas A&M U. is limiting enrollment to 15,000 new students at its flagship College Station campus while it expands its infrastructure. In Fall 2023, Texas A&M enrolled more than 76,000 students.

"We must right-size our university in the near-term to ensure we maintain an incredible education and experience for our students over the long-term," said Mark Welsh III, president.

**Texas State Sets Records.** Texas State U. set a new record with spring enrollment of 37,567 students, 5.9 percent more than last year.

**Yale C. Expanding.** Yale's Class of 2029 will be larger by 100 students, Yale College's dean Pericles Lewis told the *Yale Daily News*. Yale's first-year class size will expand to 1,650 students. "We figured that being able to admit an additional 100 students a year over time means 10,000 more students in the next century," Lewis said,

**Steep Decline in Legacies.** Only 420 four-year colleges and universities consider legacy status, the lowest number and share since this information began being collected, according to a new report from Education Reform Now. Only 11 percent of public colleges and universities consider legacy status in their admissions process. Only 30 percent of private colleges and universities consider legacy status in their admissions process. In the past decade, more than half of the colleges that once considered legacy status have stopped doing so. And five states now ban the use of legacy preferences altogether. ■

ED I & II applicants for its Class of 2029, Doug Christiansen, provost for university affairs and dean of admissions, told *The Vanderbilt Hustler*.

"When you compare the overall admit rate from last year that was 5.8 percent, students often make the assumption, 'Oh, it's easier to get in at Early Decision than Regular.' But that's simply not the case," he said. ■

## FINANCIAL

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legislation will affect approximately 6,581 students who are currently enrolled in Florida state universities, colleges and technical colleges and who received an out-of-state tuition waiver. About 535 of those students attend Florida International U. According to some estimates, as many as 400,000 undocumented students are enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities.

"I don't think you should be admitted to college in Florida if you are here illegally," said Florida Governor Ron DeSantis at a press conference after he signed the legislation, "but to give in-state tuition was just a slap in the face to taxpayers."

**State Support Grows by 4.3 Percent.** State support for higher education in fiscal year 2025 reached \$129.1 billion, a 4.3 increase over 2024, according to the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO). That is a 32.9 percent increase over the past five years. States also allocated 2.2 percent more in federal funding to support higher education than in 2024, or about \$637.9 million. That brings total state support for higher education to \$129.7 billion in 2025.

When this funding is broken down, appropriations in each area were:

- \$27.6 billion to two-year public institutions for operations;
- \$62.5 billion to four-year public institutions for operations;
- \$16.1 billion to state financial aid for all students;
- \$14.4 billion to research, agriculture extension, hospital extension and medical schools;
- \$8.5 billion to other uses including agency funding, private institution operations and noncredit appropriations.

**Cal Poly Humboldt Covers Last Dollar.** California State Polytechnic U., Humboldt promises to fill any financial aid gap after traditional financial awards have been determined, allaying students' doubts about whether they can afford to enroll. According to Chrissy Holliday, vice president for enrollment management and student success, students will learn whether they are eligible for the guarantee soon after submitting their financial aid applications. The guarantee is opened to first-year and transfer students who are California residents and continues for four years for full-time students.

CSU, Fresno has a similar program. Last year, it awarded 111 students between \$70 and \$3,300 for a total cost of \$200,000.

**Public Still Backs Government Aid To Education.** A new poll conducted for The College Investor found that most people still support public funding for education. But only 14 percent saw a clear

financial return on going to college, while 50 percent think it breaks even and 36 percent said a college education is not worth the cost. As far as eliminating the U.S. Department of Education, 56 percent are against it, while 27 percent support the idea. And 72 percent support government funding of K-12 education, while 66 percent support federal student loans.

CB will keep you informed on future developments concerning the Department of Education, particularly federal student loans, which President Trump has said will not be cut.

**Impact of NCAA Athletic Revenue Sharing.** Division I college athletics is undergoing radical changes. As a result of one legal ruling in House vs. the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the nation's top athletic conferences agreed to pay players \$2.8 billion. The NCAA's new revenue-sharing agreement allows schools to give 22 percent of the average power league school's annual revenue to its athletes, or about \$20.5 million per school during a 10-year agreement. According to the *Indianapolis Star*, Indiana U. was forced to eliminate 25 positions within its athletic department to find funds to pay athletes. IU trimmed 10 percent from various sectors including compliance, academic services and communications.

## SCHOLARSHIP SCOOPS

**ASU/LA Fire Victims.** Arizona State U. has offered "guaranteed pathways" to admissions for victims of the recent Los Angeles area fires. In addition to guaranteed admission, it offers one-on-one customized help for meeting application deadlines and managing educational costs. ASU offers in-person degree programs in Los Angeles and Arizona, as well as hundreds of ASU Online degree programs. See [asu.edu/SupportLA](http://asu.edu/SupportLA).

**Emerson Arts & Communications Aid.** A \$1.75 million gift to Emerson C. in Massachusetts established the Sally Klingenstein Martell Scholars Program to help talented arts and communications students in need of financial aid. "As government funding dwindles, individual support becomes crucial," Martell said. "Self-expression is at the heart of what makes us human, and it deserves to be nurtured and sustained."

**Rural Teacher Education.** Huntingdon C. in Montgomery, Alabama, received a one million dollar gift from two teachers with a combined experience of over 100 years. The Dr. Michael D. Murphy and Dr. Maureen K. Murphy Rural Teacher Education Scholarship Program will fund full scholarships for high-need, high achieving Alabama students who want to teach in rural schools. ■

## COUNSELOR'S BOOKSHELF

*Hands-On Career Preparation: Experiential learning to engage students and meet employers' needs, The Chronicle of Higher Education*, \$179; see the Chronicle's online source store.

*Serving Nontraditional Students, The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and *The Future of Regional Publics, The Chronicle of Higher Education*. (\$69

each.) Find both at the Chronicle's online store at [www.chronicle.com](http://www.chronicle.com).

*Student Datasets, The Chronicle of Higher Education*, includes "The Student Diversity dataset," "The Student Characteristic dataset" and "The Student Outcomes and Completion Rate dataset" from 3,000 to 4,000 institutions.

"Geography of Opportunity," is a new report from The Institute for College Access & Success.

"This analysis draws connections between geographic location and key drivers of educational inequality, offering researchers and policymakers new ways of thinking about college access, affordability, basic needs and student success."

Find it at <https://ticas.org/college-value/geography-of-opportunity>. ■



## CURRICULUM CAPSULES

**Accounting Popular.** Undergraduate enrollment in accounting programs increased by 12 percent in Fall 2024 to the highest level in four years, according to a recent *Journal of Accountancy*. That meant 287,278 students were enrolled in accounting programs. However, graduate accounting enrollment fell by 2.8 percent from the previous fall, with a head count of 25,472.

"Strong accounting enrollment is heartening," said Sue Coffey, CEO-Public for the the Association of International Certified Professional Accountants. "The larger undergraduate student body presents a bigger opportunity to demonstrate to students the dynamic, rewarding career opportunities accounting can deliver."

**More First-Year Law Students.** According to new data released by the American Bar Association, the number of first-year JD students at U.S. law schools in 2024 increased by 4.5 percent over 2023, from 38,891 to 40,650.

**SUNY's New Core Competency Requirements.** Beginning in Fall 2026, students attending The State University of New York will be required to take new civil discourse training and updates to the existing information literacy core competencies as part of their general education curriculum.

"We are proud that every SUNY student will be expected to demonstrate the knowledge and skills that advance respectful and reasoned discourse, and that we will help our students recognize and ethically use AI as they consider various information sources," said John B. King Jr., chancellor.

SUNY, "the largest comprehensive system of higher education in the United States," operates 64 colleges and universities, including medical and law schools and programs and educates about 1.4 million credit and non-credit students.

**Texas A & M/Maritime Licensing.** Texas A&M U. is offering in-state tuition for all U.S. undergraduate students who enroll in its U.S. Coast Guard license program offered at its Galveston campus. Over the past four years, Texas A&M has transformed its Galveston branch campus into an experimental hub of Marine, Maritime and coastal education, innovation and service

"Nearly 90 percent of graduates report immediate employment after graduation with well-paying jobs and careers such as port and vessel operations, marine engineering and offshore energy development."

**USC to Introduce EA for Business & Accounting.** Beginning the 2026-27 admissions cycle, the U. of Southern California will use bidding Early Decision applications in business and accounting, the *Daily Trojan* reported.

Since 2022-23, USC has used Early Action applications for all students. EA acceptances are not binding on the student. More than half of USC's 81,800 applicants for the Class of 2028 used this option. USC deferred 81 percent of it EA applicants to Regular Decision that cycle.

About 450 colleges and universities across the nation currently use EA or ED for some or all of their programs, according to the College Board. ■

## Testing Tabs

**Miami Reinstates Standardized Testing.** The U. of Miami in Florida will require students who are applying during the 2026 undergrad admissions cycle to submit scores from the SAT or ACT.

"The University's undergraduate admissions counselors will still use a holistic process to review each applicant, carefully considering and contextualizing a student's academic record, extracurricular activities, including community involvement and work, personal statement and standardized test scores," one admissions officer explained.

Recently, **Dartmouth C., Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Johns Hopkins U.** reinstated the standardized testing requirement. Meanwhile, **Oakland U.** in Rochester, Michigan, reaffirmed its test-optional policy for incoming first-year students. So did **Carleton C.** in Minnesota, following a five-year pilot and extensive analysis. Carleton found that students who did not submit test scores had the same or higher retention rates as those who did.

**Learning Loss.** K-12 students are still testing behind where they were before the pandemic. The gap is called "Learning Loss." In December, the EdWeek Research Center conducted a nationally representative poll of 990 teachers, principals and district leaders and found that they think Learning Loss is "moderate" or "severe." This is despite the fact that schools have used a combination of interventions to help students catch up, including in- and after-school tutoring, emphasis on social-emotional well-being and summer school.

"The share of students receiving summer school and the share of students attending summer school was lower than needed," said Thomas Kane, a professor at Harvard Graduate School of Education. "The recovery efforts were not intensive enough. Second, districts implementing large-scale tutoring for the first time had challenges."

**NAEP Tests Cancelled for 17 Year-olds.** The U.S. Dept. of Ed. announced that it has canceled the National Assessment for Educational Progress tests in math and reading for 17-year-olds. The tests have been administered since the 1970s.

"All field operations and activities will end today, February 19, 2025," the Department announced. It said that saves \$900 million in contracts with the Institute of Education Sciences. ■

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## NEWS YOU CAN USE

**Race-Based Policies Declared Illegal.** In February, the Trump Administration's Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights issued a four-page letter that announced that henceforth, race-based policies and programs are illegal in K-college institutions. This applies to "every facet of academia," including scholarships, academic prizes, campus cultural centers and graduation ceremonies, because they are seen to be discriminatory and violate current civil rights laws. The notice gave institutions 14 days to comply or risk losing federal funding.

The mandate is based on a broader interpretation of the Supreme Court's rulings on affirmative action and in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*. Almost immediately, there was push-back from organizations such

as the American Council on Education and several college presidents. Lawsuits are likely to be filed in the near future, and the issue is likely to end up at the Supreme Court. *CB* will keep you posted.

**Common App Adding Community Colleges.** The Common App added its first seven new Community College partners in February. All are members of the Illinois Community College System: Sauk Valley Community, Rend Lake, Carl Sandburg and Black Hawk Colleges, all of which are active beginning this academic year.

Lincoln Land Community, Oakton and Triton colleges will participate beginning next admissions cycle. Others community colleges will follow. ■

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